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COUNCIL IN THE MOON

THE COUNCIL IN THE MOON
BY J. R. R. TOLKIEN

ON THE
SOUTH-EAST CORNER OF THE GREAT HALL
OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON
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T H E

COUNCIL in the MOON.

TRAVELLING is become an essential part of a Gentleman's Education. Being very sensible of it's Advantages, I some Time ago formed a Design of making the grand Tour ; but upon reflecting how often that scheme had been taken, and that I was pretty well read in the Observations Travellers have given us on the Curiosities to be met with in it, I determined to alter my Rout, and, boldly pursuing an unbeaten Track, to make a Visit to the Regions of the Moon. Accordingly I fet out, and arrived there in great Safety. I see the Mouths of all the World are open upon me to know, by what Sort
B of

of Machine, or Vehicle, I transported myself thither. Hold a little, Gentlemen! That's a Secret not to be discovered, till an handsome Reward is offered by the Government. But so far I'll satisfy you, that I was neither conveyed by a Broomstick, a Pair of Wings, a Berlin, a Post-Coach, or any other *Flying* Machine.

The Lunatics (for so the People are called) bear the most exact Resemblance to the Inhabitants of the Earth, in their Persons, Customs, Manners, and Ways of Living. They, like ourselves, blindly pursue Shadows for Substances, oppose the plainest Dictates of Nature and Reason, and often philosophize themselves out of their Happiness, whilst they mean to fix it upon the surest Foundations. Without Consideration or Choice, and even without common Thought, they ardently espouse one Opinion, rather than another. It is no uncommon Thing among Them to be led into the same Persuasion, by the Habit they wear, the Tribe or Company with which they are connected; by the Vocation in Life they happen to be engaged in, or by the Multitude, that, like a Torrent, carries Them, with irresistible Force, into whatever Channel it pleases.

pleases. They submit to the Tyranny of Prejudice or Custom, as if Nature had given Them no Strength to make Resistance. They desert their own Judgment to pursue other Men's Fancies, and defend with Passion, what they have embraced without Reason.

I hope no Offence to the Manes of Copernicus or any of his Brethren, if I take the Liberty to assert that the Moon might, with as much Propriety, be called the Earth's Mirror or Looking-Glass, as it's Satellite. For it is surprizing to see, with what Faithfulness and Precision every Thing, that is transacted upon Earth, is reflected in her. There seems to be an unaccountable Sympathy between the Inhabitants of the two Planets; not unlike that between the Wheels and the living Creatures in Ezekiel's Vision; which I will not pay my courteous Readers so ill a Compliment, as to suppose Them unacquainted with.

It happened in my Travels over the Moon, that I fell into a little Republic very remarkable for the Oddity of some of it's Laws and Customs. None of Them struck me with greater Wonder
and

and Surprize, than that every Member of this Community was forbid, upon Pain of Expulsion, to eat *Cheese with his Bread.*†

This Law has been inviolably preserved since the first Institution of the Republic to this Day, except by those, who preside over the different Companies it is distributed into. These Gentlemen, by the Assistance of Interpretation, have found Means to dispense with it. *Interpretation* is a Kind of racking Engine, bequeathed to some of the Companies by their Founders, to which a poor Word that stands indicted of opposing Pleasure or Convenience in certain Cases, is dragged to be squeezed and tortured, till it is fright-

† Various have been the Conjectures of the Learned in the Moon, concerning the Origin of this and some other Laws equally unaccountable. But the Majority agree in deriving it from the Pythagoreans, a Sect that transmigrated to the Moon, a great Number of Years ago. This Opinion is supposed to be founded upon the following Passage in Diogenes Laertius : Παντός δὲ μᾶλλον ἀπηγόρευε μήτε ἐρυθρὸν ἐσθίειν, μήτε μελάνουρον καρδίας τε ἀπέχεσθαι καὶ κυάμων. Ἀριστοτέλης δὲ φησι, καὶ μήτρας καὶ τριγλῆς ἐνίοτε. Αὐτὸν δὲ ἀρκεῖσθαι, μέλιτι μόνω (φασί τινες) ἢ κηρίῳ, ἢ ἄρτω. De Pythag. It must be confessed that there are three Words in this Quotation that seem to favour the Opinion. And we may safely say, that many a well-fronted Hypothesis has been built upon a weaker Foundation, and supported by it too, for a considerable Length of Time.

frightened out of all it's *Senses*, and made to say whatever the Inquisitors please. During my Stay here, I had the Curiosity to examine a Book of Laws belonging to one of the Companies, and found the following Order written in Latin—*Cælebs sit M-g-ft-r, et Cælibes sint S-c-i*—Which is, being interpreted; Let the Governor be a temperate Man, and let the inferior Members of the Company eat no Cheese. I must confess, I think the Governors acted like wise Men, and according to the Order of Nature, in endeavouring to get rid of so absurd a Restriction; tho' it is apprehended such a Step would have been taken with a better Grace under a certain Sanction, which, with little Shew of Reason, could have been denied it. But this by the By.

At the very Juncture of my being at this Republic, a Genius arose, of a more enlarged Turn of Mind, than we generally meet with among the Inhabitants of the Lunar Regions, who proposed a Scheme of applying to the Legislature, for Permission to abolish the very Law I have been speaking of. What impartial and disinterested Man would imagine such a Proposal could receive any Opposition? But there is a Number

of little groveling Spirits to be found in every Place, who either being unable to comprehend the Meaning of any Thing that is great and generous, or stung with Envy of that Lustre a patriotic Character ever displays, or from some other Reasons equally reproachable, are ready, upon all Occasions that offer, to contribute their Mite of Opposition. So it was here. Nevertheless the Scheme had many Advocates, and such too, as reflected no small Credit upon it. It became the common Topic of Conversation throughout the whole Republic; and there seemed to be a Contention among it's Enemies, who should make the absurdest Suppositions and Conjectures, in order to bring it into Ridicule. At length however a Council was called by the chief Magistrate, in which those Members of the Republic, who had any Objections to the Scheme, were desired, one by one, to deliver their Sentiments in a set Speech; to avoid the Tumult and Disorder of a Number of People talking promiscuously. The Interest of a Friend procured me a Corner in this illustrious Assembly; and as I minuted down all I heard there, and it may not be unentertaining to my Readers, I will impart it to Them.

It

It is usual with most modern Orators, when they rise up to address a public Audience, before they speak, to make some preliminary Hems and Haws, to cough or spit, to stroak their Beards, or pull down their Shirt-sleeves, to rub their Hands together, adjust their Wigs, or pull up their Breeches. As each Orator stood up, whilst he was making some such necessary Prelude; my Friend, who placed himself by me, informed me of his Name, and drew a short Sketch of his Character. The first Person who made an Harangue upon this Occasion, was, as I found by my Instructor, Mr. TIMOTHY PORE, a great Politician; a Man that saw through many Things beside his Spectacles. When any Thing was mentioned in a mysterious Way, he always very gravely shook his Head, tho' there was *Nothing* in it. He had a marvellous Knack at smelling out a Secret, where there was none. He could tell you, twelve Hours beforehand, when the Post would bring bad News, as peremptorily, as an old Woman's Corn foretels Rain. In short, he was a very smoaky Fellow, and spoke to the following Purpose:

"Gentlemen!

“ Gentlemen! I plainly foresee the Ruin and Downfall of this our Constitution must be the immediate Consequence of admitting the extraordinary Scheme lately proposed. Doubtless the Projector of it is a Man of deep Design, and entertains no good Will toward our Community. To let you into a Secret, Gentlemen! I question whether he is not a † Jesuit, or, at least, whether he is not backed by some of that desperate Order. But hold; upon farther Consideration, I am rather inclined to suspect he is a Mahometan. A Member of the Church of Rome once endeavoured, in his *Calvino-Turcismus*, to fix an Imputation of Mahometanism upon a great Reformer; but I can, with much greater Shew of Reason, undertake to prove that our Reformer’s Principles bear incontestible Marks of that impious Leaven. If we consider how great a Cheefemonger Mahomet himself was, and how liberal in his Allowance of Cheese to his Disciples; if we consider too, that the chief Entertainment he promised them in his Paradise, was to consist of various sorts of Cheese, we may fairly
 enough

† The Reader will not wonder to hear the Orator talking of Jesuit and Mahometan, and some other Things that seem at first meer sublunary affairs, when he recollects the exact Correspondence, I spoke of, between our Planet and the Moon.

enough conclude that our Reformer's Scheme proceeds upon the Mahometan System.----- Surely the imminent Danger that threatens us cannot too much alarm those, who possess but the most common Degree of Penetration and Foresight. For were the wicked Designs of this Projector to be encouraged, and his Proposal to be embraced; it is unnecessary to inform this sagacious Body, that the most certain Consequence must be a total Infringement of all wholesome Laws and Discipline, both religious and political, and an Introduction to universal Anarchy and Confusion." Here Mr. PORE concluded, and sat down with a Smile of great Complacency and Self-Satisfaction, fully convinced of the Justness of his Conjectures, and the irrefragable Strength of his Arguments.

Next stood up the venerable Mr. RICHARD RUST. This Gentleman was of very ancient standing in his Company. Being very old himself, he had contracted a wonderful Affection for every Thing that was so. It seems to be an universal Principle among Mankind, to love what most resembles themselves. The Wig Mr. RUST had on, was, like himself, so old and so entirely

unfit for Use, that it was impossible he should not prefer it to any other. This patient Grizzle after having a few Winters maintained it's crisped Honours against all Inclemencies of Weather, and the Riots and Frolics of it's Master's younger Days, in the Year One thousand seven hundred and thirty, gave up it's last Curl ; and Mr. Rust, in Consideration of it's past Services, permitted his Band to curl, by Deputation, for it. He wore an old threadbare Suit of Cloaths, which, we learn by Tradition, had been once black, and constantly carried, in his Hand, an Ebony Walking Stick, that, in Days of Yore, had supported the aged Steps of his Great Grandmother. This he thrice knocked against the Floor to command Attention, and expressed himself as follows :

“ Gentlemen ! I must ingenuously confess that, in my Youth, my Mouth has, now and then, wickedly watered for a Piece of Cheese ; nor am I ignorant that some graceless Aspersions have been thrown upon my Character, insinuating, that I had more than once been caught nibbling. But I am now arrived at an Age, equally unobnoxious to those liquorish Longings, and to any Imputations of using Means to gratify them.

them. My Judgment is at length cooled and matured by a long Series of Reflection, and I have learned that there is nothing more valuable or sacred than the old Customs and Usages of our Forefathers. The Sound only of the Word Innovation, is enough to give me a Fit of the Palsey. Eat Cheefe with our Bread?—Unheard of Depravity! 'Tis enough to disturb the Repose of our venerable Ancestors, and make them start from their Graves. Was such an impious Innovation to be admitted, what evil Consequences might we not expect? What Abuses of the most ancient Rites and established Ceremonies, is it not likely, would succeed? I should hardly be surprized to see the good old Custom of eating Plumb-Porridge, on Christmas-Day, abolished: St. Michael and all Angels would scarcely be able to assert their Privilege of Goose and roast Pork: And I may live to see the Day, when Shrove-Tide itself shall pass unhal-
lowed by Apple-Pancakes. I well remember some strange Forebodings and Apprehensions seized my Heart, when they turned the poor Old Stile out of Doors. I then trembled lest that restless Spirit of Innovation should diffuse itself. And now to see the Daemon actually
working

working to undermine a wife Custom that has obtained in our Community, ever since it's first Foundation, is more than I can——" Here Grief and Vexation choaked the old Gentleman's Utterance, and obliged him to sit down before he had finished his Harangue.

An Orator now rose, whom I observed to have been remarkably on the Fret, from the first Moment he entered the Assembly. Sometimes he looked wild and angry, would every now and then rise from his Seat, then sit down again in much Agitation, and wipe his Face, which was bedewed with a cold Sweat. This, says my Friend at my Elbow, is Mr. LOFTY, who is promoted to an important Office in one of our Companies. His Christian Name is so much eclipsed by the Glare of his Titles and Dignities, that one can't see it. So you must excuse my not giving an Account of it. He is a very choleric Sort of a Man, and has, I am afraid, a small Spice of Pride in his Constitution. He is now in high Fermentation, and you will see him, in a very short Time, froth at the Mouth, like a Barrel of new Small-Beer, at the Cork-Hole. Scarce had my Instructor made his Ob-

servation,

servation, but the Truth of it was proved, and this Vessel of Wrath ran over to the following Effect :

“ Of all the Plans that ever were planned, the Schemes that ever were schemed, and Proposals that ever were proposed, the Plan, Scheme or Proposal now under Consideration, is the most absurd, ridiculous, and romantic. The Author of it is a Blockhead, and an Ass, and deserves to be expelled our Community. Were Permission given that all Members of our Republic might eat Cheese with their Bread, People may pretend that many of them would not, or could not go to the Expence of it, or that others would not taste it, if it was set before them ; but maugre all such idle, false, and frivolous Arguments, I could demonstrate, were not my Assertion sufficient, that every Individual, to a Man, would immediately embrace the Privilege. The Effect would be, that the Rascals, being allowed Cheese, would spare their Children some of the Bread procured for themselves by the Favour and Interest of the Governors of their several Companies, and be encouraged to educate their

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Brats

† Brats to be impertinent and troublesome to *Them*, and, for ought I know, a Detriment to the Kingdom in general. I am aware there are many People, who insist upon it, that there is no Ground for these Suggestions; but give me Leave to say, that they are all Fools, and know Nothing about the Matter.

The Gentleman, who spoke next, was Mr. CHRISTOPHER CRAB, a Man not destitute of Wit and Humour. He was esteemed a great Critic, because there was Nothing he would not find Fault with. He was a Man of unlimited Conjecture; which often led him to shew his Invention at the Expence of his Judgment. He did not want Knowledge, especially that of Mankind; but he was not always happy in his Application of it. It was too common with him, to form general Conclusions and establish Maxims upon Cases meerly possible. He had some
Fluency

† The Orator here seems to espouse an idle Notion, some had conceived, that the Emoluments the Members of the Republic now enjoy'd, but for themselves, would, upon adopting the Cheese-Scheme, generally become the Inheritance of their Children.

Fluency of Words, but more Vivacity than Elegance. Hear him----

“ Gentlemen! I am of Opinion, that under no Restrictions whatsoever, ought this new Scheme to be admitted. I shall chiefly draw my Arguments from the Nature of Cheese in general, and some particular Consequences that are found to arise from eating it. In the first Place then, Cheese is absolutely prejudicial to many *Constitutions*: There are many People (likely enough to be met with among the more recluse Lunatics) who bear such an *Antipathy* to Cheese, that they avoid being in the same Room with it. Then Cheese, tho’ confessedly efficacious in digesting other Things, does not easily digest itself, and will often *lie so long at a Man’s Stomach*, as to give him infinite Plague and Vexation. Besides Cheese is generally too *hard*, or too *soft*, too *tough*, or too *pliant*, too *strong*, or quite *insipid*. Then there’s your *maggoty* Cheese, your *rotten* Cheese, your Cheese that every Body has *tasted*, and your *Slip-Coat* Cheese. A very dangerous Sort of Cheese this last! for being apt to *run* beyond its prescribed Limits, it is often impossible for the Proprietor, tho’

tho' he *loves* it ever so well, to secure it entirely to his own Use. In short, Gentlemen! I cannot help concluding, from the Course of my Observations, that there is no such Thing as a good Cheese in the World; and therefore, I think it would argue the highest Degree of Insanity to apply to the Legislature, for removing an Obstacle, that happily prevents our coming at it."

An ingenuous young Man, who sat near Mr. CRAB, so highly resented the Acrimony of his Speech, that he rose up; and, bowing to the Chief Magistrate, said, "That tho' he apprehended his Design in calling the present Council, was rather to hear what Objections could be produced to the Scheme, than for any other Purpose, yet, as he was convinced Mr CRAB had gone very unwarrantable Lengths in some of his Observations and Conclusions, he could not help asking Permission to offer a Remonstrance or two. Which being granted him, he desired the Orator to recollect, "That there was such a Thing as *Sage* Cheese; and that being *green* Cheese (a Circumstance that would prejudice many Men in it's Favour) and consequently
of

of the same Kind that forms the Materials of which the Moon was made, he thought it very unworthy a *Man in the Moon*, to suppose that Species was not to be found there in great Abundance." He next observed, " that *toasted* Cheese was held in high Estimation by Men of the best Taste. And indeed when Cheese has passed unhurt and unfulled through that *fiery Trial*, it is impossible to say too much in it's Commendation." He added, " that always having professed himself a great Admirer of Cheese in general, he had paid so much Attention to that useful Commodity, that he could with Confidence assert, that there was much more good Cheese, than bad, in the World : " and concluded with saying, " He could not help suspecting, that Mr. GRAB, in Spite of all Restraints, might have made some Experiments in his Time that had proved unfortunate. "

I think I have hitherto given no Intimation to my Readers, that this Republic was established principally for the Cultivation of the Understanding. But there are some People in it, who do not cultivate their Understandings, and others, who have no Understandings to cultivate. Of this

this last Class was SIMON SHALLOW, who next seized the Ears of this respectable Audience with a Speech. SIMON never doubted the Truth of any Story he had heard in his Life. He had no clear Ideas of any Thing in the World. He would swallow you half a Dozen Impossibilities in a Breath, without making a Face. He could not be said to think, in any true Sense of that Word, and seemed to have no Property in his own Ideas. He voided them just as he received them, as Children do Cherry-Stones. He lisped in his Speech, and sputtered like a roasting Pippin. But with all these Disadvantages, he was not proscribed the Pale of Common-Sense, according to the Definition some People give of it; for SIMON had *a good Deal to say for himself*. What he said upon this Occasion, I will now lay before you.

“ Gentlemen ! I have been told that there is Nothing in Nature more pernicious than Cheese. And I can produce such Instances of it’s ill Effects, as will leave no Reason to doubt the Truth of this Assertion. I remember having heard from my Nurse, who thought she had heard it from my Grandmother, that Cheese
would

would give a Man the Rheumatism and the Ear-Ach : And a very sensible Country Apothecary, a Cousin of mine, says, that he can attribute a Sore Throat, or a Fever on the Spirits, to Nothing but Cheese. For my own Part, I never see a Cheese, but it puts me in Mind of the Dropfy, Yellow Jaundice, and King's Evil ; and I am certain, were the new Scheme admitted, we should all be afflicted with those Disorders. Nay, such a terrible Notion have I of this baneful Commodity, that I should not at all wonder to hear a Man had got a Leprosy, a wry Neck, or a Fit of the Gout, by eating it Dixi."

The whole Audience stared to hear Mr. SHALLOW talk at so strange a Rate ; and even the Partisans of the Cause he undertook to defend, must have thought he meant to laugh at it, had he not put on the most serious and solemn Countenance, that ever apologized for an empty Head.

Another Gentleman, whose Name my Friend had forgot, delivered his Sentiments upon the Subject under Consideration. But before he had
finished

finished the third Period of an Harangue most elaborately dull ; my Attention was diverted by a very singular Circumstance. A certain *Naturalist*, a Friend of mine, in my native Planet, meeting with a Bird of Passage, that was going to take up it's Winter-Quarters in the Moon, took an Opportunity to tie, round it's Neck, a little Billet addressed to myself. This winged Messenger directed it's Flight to me with great Sagacity ; and upon examining the Express, I found myself obliged, on Account of some Affairs of great Moment, to return immediately to my sublunary Home ; which prevented my knowing the Issue of the Council. As I took Leave of my Friend in the Corner, I could not help making the following Reflection upon what I had heard: *That, when Men's Opinions are suggested, rather by some ruling Passion, peculiar Cast of Character, or Reasons meerly local, than by a candid, liberal, and unbiassed Examination, they are justly liable to a Suspicion of being equally destitute of Truth and Impartiality.*

APOLOGY.

A P O L O G Y.

THE Author thinks proper to declare that no one of the Characters, in the preceding Pages, is designed for any particular Person, and that he knows no Individual, to whom any of them could, with Propriety, be applied. As the Grecian Painter, when he drew the Picture of Helen, for the Agrigentines, selected, from a Number of beautiful Women, those Limbs and Features, that were most striking and perfect, in each of them; so the Author, in drawing Pictures of another Cast, has taken the Liberty to borrow of one Person, his blear Eye; of another, his wry Mouth; of a third, red Hair; of a fourth, a large Wen; an Hunch-back of a fifth; and so on, till his Pieces have, in a certain Degree, reached his Ideas of the *Beauty* of Ugliness. Now as no one of the Ladies, out of whose Charms Zeuxis composed his Helen, had any Right to call the Picture her own; so no Individual whatsoever, upon seeing the Portraits of Mr. PORE, Mr. RUST, or any of the respectable Group, has any Right to challenge this, or that, as his own Likeness.

F I N I S.

A P O L O G Y

THE Author thinks proper to declare that
no one of the Characters, in the preceding
Pages, is designed for any particular Person,
and that he knows no Individual, to whom any
of them could, with Propriety, be applied. He
the Author himself, wishes to give the Rights
of Liberty, to the American People, and
to a number of honest, virtuous, and sensible
Persons, who are engaged in the Cause, in
each of them; to the Author, as drawing from
them a general Idea, that the Liberty is
bottomed on one Point, the Right of Liberty;
other, his wish is, of a more extensive
of a Liberty, a large Liberty, and a Liberty
free; and to one, and to the Liberty, in a
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